

ISAAC

AND REBEKAH.

DEAN & SON

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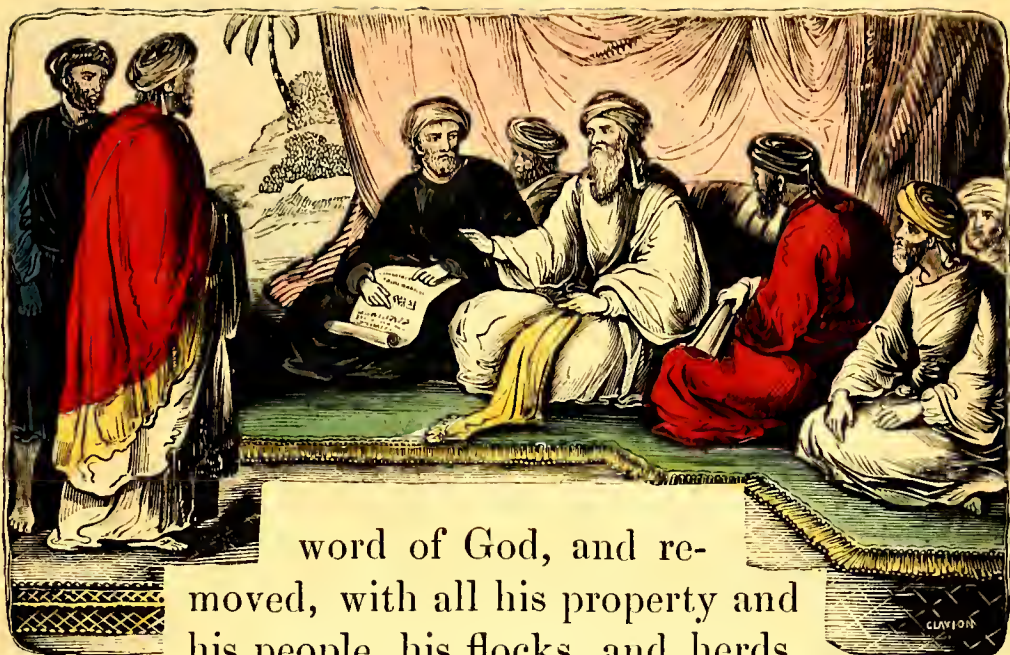
# ISAAC AND REBEKAH.



BRAHAM, the  
father of Isaac, was  
born in the country

of Mesopotamia, which was a part of Syria, about three thousand years before the birth of Christ. He lived for a very long time in the land of his birth, among his own kindred, and was possessed of great wealth in gold and silver, and vast flocks of sheep and herds of cattle; but, what is better still, he was a good man, and God loved him, because he walked in his ways.

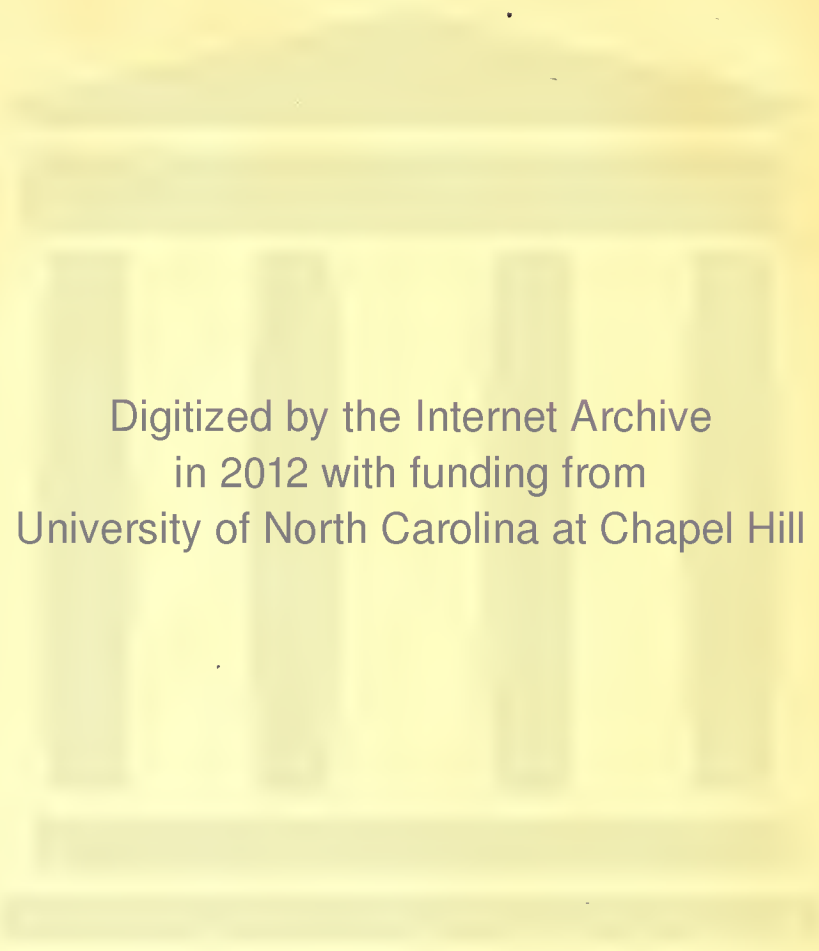
Now when Abraham was somewhat advanced in years, the Lord commanded him to leave his native place and go to the land of Canaan, a fertile and beautiful country, now called Palestine, or the Holy Land. And God promised to give all that country to him and his posterity, that is, to his children and their children after them, for all generations; and God also told him that he should be the father of many nations, that would be great and powerful in after times. But how was this to come to pass? for Abraham had neither son nor daughter; however, he trusted in the



word of God, and removed, with all his property and his people, his flocks, and herds, to the land of Canaan, where he settled, and in time became lord of the whole country.

The people of those countries did not then live in houses, but in tents, as the wandering Arabs do at the present day; and thus Abraham lived in the midst of his people, and was their ruler, their priest, and their judge; for there was no king, therefore this was called the patriarchal form of government, meaning the kind of authority that a father has over his children. Still Abraham had no son to inherit his lands, which caused him much grief; for years passed away, and he and his wife were both very old.

At length God appeared to him in a dream, and said, that he was now about to send him a son, who was to be named Isaac, and through whom, the promise he had made to Abraham, of his family's future greatness, was to be fulfilled; and so it came to pass; for Isaac was the father of Jacob, who had twelve sons, and their families, in course of time, formed the twelve tribes of Israel, who divided the land of Canaan amongst them, and constitu



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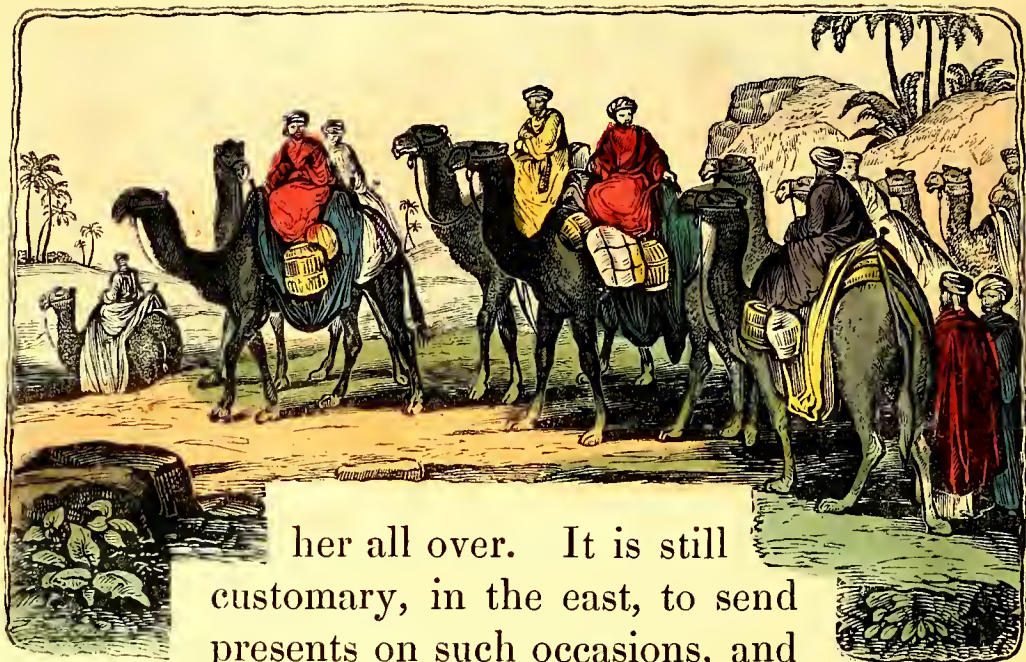


whole nation of the Hebrews or Jews. Abraham and Sarah his wife rejoiced greatly

when Isaac was born; and they had reason to take pleasure in him, for he was a child of an excellent disposition, being brought up to reverence and obey his parents, and to fear the Lord. He lived to the age of forty, without being married, when his father was anxious that he should have a wife from among his own family or kindred, and not from those of a stranger; so he resolved to send to his former country, where many of his relatives still resided, to seek a damsel for his son's bride.

But Abraham's strong affection for his only child, made him unwilling to let Isaac go by himself; so he commissioned his steward, who was an old and faithful servant, to go to Haran, the place of his birth, and select a wife for his son from among the maidens of his own kindred; and he sent many presents to be given to the damsel and her friends. Some of these were jewels and bridal dresses, the latter being probably vests of rich silk, as such garments were always among the wedding clothes of a bride in opulent circumstances, who also wore a veil that covered





her all over. It is still customary, in the east, to send presents on such occasions, and

indeed no one ever makes a visit without being provided with some gift for the person to whom the visit is paid. Even the poorest people follow this custom, as far as their circumstances will allow, and when they go to see each other, will carry with them a flower, an orange, or some other trifle, to present to their friend.

But to return to our story. The steward set out on his errand, attended by several of his master's servants, with ten camels to carry provisions and water for the journey. The camel is the most useful of all animals in the east, since, without it, there would be no possibility of traversing the sandy plains in those countries.

The steward at length arrived at the city in which his master's kinsmen dwelt, and finding a well near the place, he stopped at it to give the camels drink. It was evening,







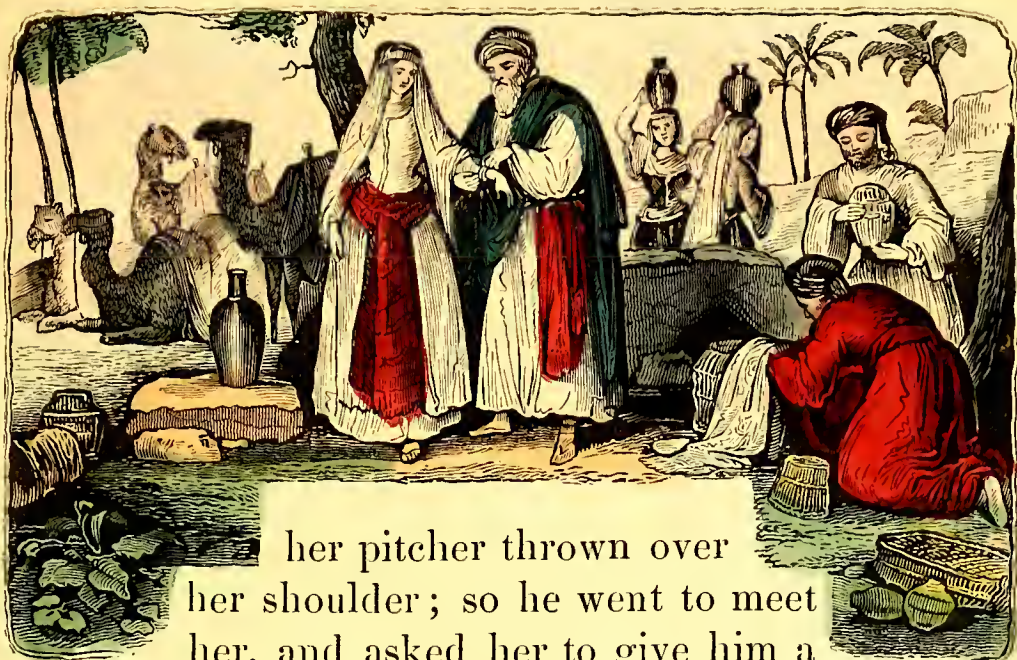
and the young women of the city were coming out with their pitchers to get water ; for in those

times the manners of the people were so simple, that the daughters of the richest men fetched water from the wells for the use of the family ; we therefore need not think it strange that Abraham's servant should look among these damsels for a suitable bride for his young master. But he was afraid of trusting to his own judgment, so he prayed to God to send him a sign, by which he might know how to make his choice, saying, " O Lord, I pray thee, let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say,—‘ Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink ;’ and she shall answer, ‘ Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also ;’—let the same be her that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac."

He had scarcely made an end to his prayer, when he saw a beautiful young girl coming towards the well, with







her pitcher thrown over her shoulder; so he went to meet her, and asked her to give him a little water to drink. She answered, with ready kindness, "Drink, my lord; and I will draw water for thy camels, also." Then the man thanked God in his heart for sending him the sign he had prayed for; and said to himself, "This is surely the maiden whom the Lord has appointed to be the wife of my master's son." He then enquired what was her name? and whose daughter she was? when, to his great joy, he found she was Rebekah, the daughter of Nabor, who was Abraham's brother.

By all these circumstances, we may see that the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was by the especial will of God, who put it into the heart of the steward to pray for a sign by which he might know on whom to fix his choice.

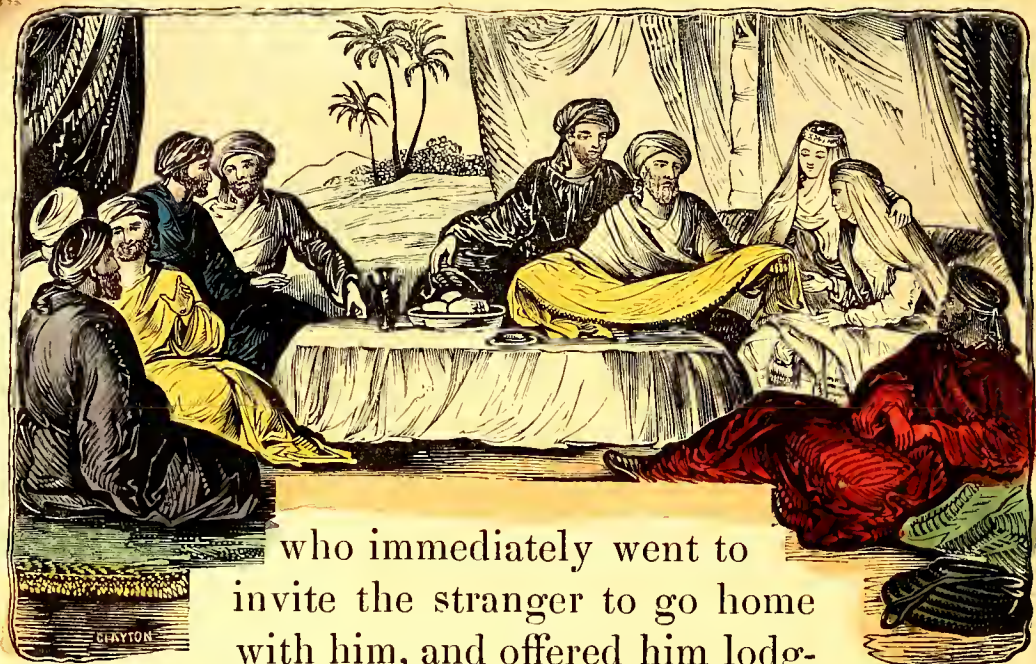
That wise and trusty servant then took from among the presents he had brought, a pair of golden bracelets, weighing ten shekels, which was equal to five ounces; and put them on the arms of Rebekah; and he also gave her a golden ornament which, in the Bible, is called an ear-ring.

Rebekah ran to shew the presents to her brother Laban,









who immediately went to invite the stranger to go home with him, and offered him lodging and entertainment for himself, his men, and camels, as long as he chose to remain there. The steward went home with him, and a supper was presently prepared; but before he could eat, he made known his errand in that country; told how God had directed him to choose Rebekah, in preference to any other damsel; and asked her mother and brother if they are willing to let her return with him, to marry her cousin Isaac? to which they consented; for they saw that it was the will of God that this marriage should take place, and they doubted not that Isaac, like his father Abraham, was a good man.

The steward then presented the gifts he had brought, after which he sat down to supper, feeling sure that he had done right, and that his master, Abraham, would be pleased with him.

On the following morning, he requested leave to depart; but the friends of Rebekah begged he would permit her to stay with them a few days longer. However, he said it was his duty to return as quickly as possible; therefore,





they agreed to let the damsel decide for herself, whether she would go or not; and she

consented to go. Then they objected no longer; and Rebekah, taking an affectionate leave of her mother and brother, set out with the trusty steward, accompanied by her nurse, and several other female attendants.

One evening, as Isaac was watching in the fields, he saw the camels returning, and women riding on them. He hastened to meet them; and, when Rebekah saw them coming, she alighted from her camel, and put her veil over her, to conceal her face, according to the custom of the maidens of that country, at those times, and to this day. The steward then related to Isaac all that had happened, at which he was much pleased, and taking Rebekah by the hand, led her to the tent, which had been the abode of Sarah, his mother, who was long since dead.

They were married according to the Jewish customs, with the blessings of their father Abraham, and lived very happily together, for many years; and their sons were Esau and Jacob, whose interesting history will be related in another book.

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